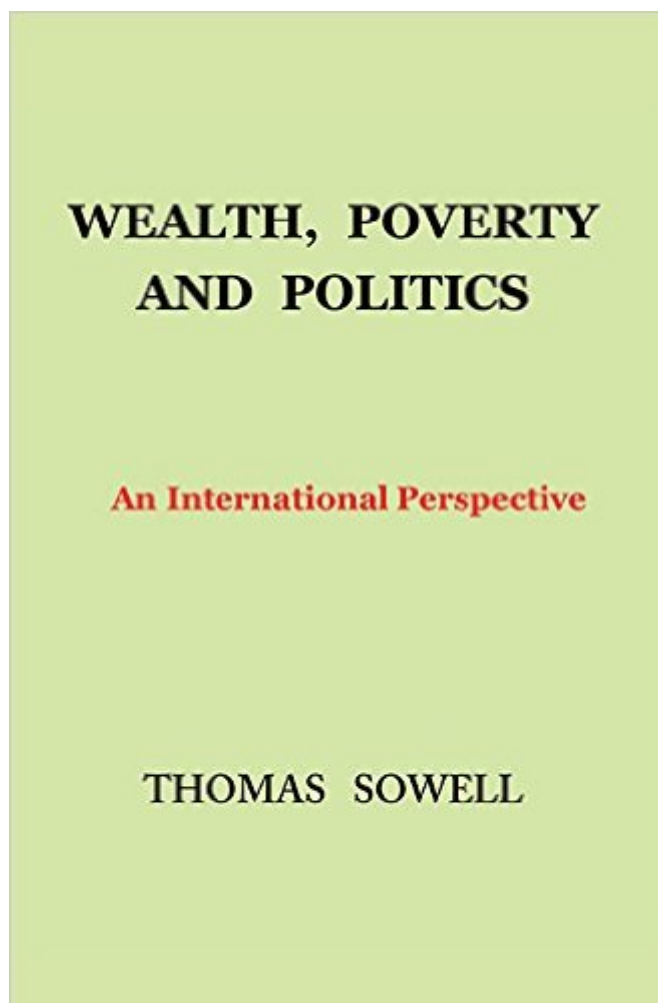


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Wealth, Poverty And Politics: An International Perspective



Synopsis

In *Wealth, Poverty, and Politics*, Thomas Sowell, one of the foremost conservative public intellectuals in this country, argues that political and ideological struggles have led to dangerous confusion about income inequality in America. Pundits and politically motivated economists trumpet ambiguous statistics and sensational theories while ignoring the true determinant of income inequality: the production of wealth. We cannot properly understand inequality if we focus exclusively on the distribution of wealth and ignore wealth production factors such as geography, demography, and culture. Sowell contends that liberals have a particular interest in misreading the data and chastises them for using income inequality as an argument for the welfare state. Refuting Thomas Piketty, Paul Krugman, and others on the left, Sowell draws on accurate empirical data to show that the inequality is not nearly as extreme or sensational as we have been led to believe. Transcending partisanship through a careful examination of data, *Wealth, Poverty, and Politics* reveals the truth about the most explosive political issue of our time.

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Customer Reviews

“The proliferation of black politicians and of community activists provided a great increase of leaders • promoting the same kind of vision that ethnic leaders have promoted to many other lagging groups in many other countries around the world. That vision is one in which the lagging groups problems are due primarily, if not solely, to the malign actions of other groups. The answers offered to blacks in America have been in principle “despite local variations” very much like the

answers offered to Czechs in nineteenth century Bohemia, Sinhalese in twentieth century Sri Lanka, Maoris in New Zealand and many others elsewhere: group solidarity in pursuit of collective political solutions and, in the meantime, resistance to the cultures of those who are more fortunate.â • -- page 157

There is a reason that Thomas Sowell is my favorite economist. In each of his books he takes on conventional wisdom and tears it to shreds. Such is the case in his latest work "Wealth, Poverty and Politics: An International Perspective". Dr. Sowell shatters the popular notion that capitalism is largely responsible for most of the socioeconomic ills in the world today. He presents in painstaking detail many of the reasons why certain ethnic groups in particular locales continue to lag behind. At the same time he also explains why other groups succeed and prosper. There are so many factors in play such as geography, demographic composition, weather, availability of water, education, disease, cultural differences and of course politics (as demonstrated in the quotation above) that accounts for much of the economic disparity in the world today. Sowell believes that simply blaming capitalism for all of the world's ills is incredibly simplistic.

Thomas Sowell's latest book is the usual tour-de-force. It's not so much that there's anything startlingly new (although there are some interesting new statistics and several new lines of thought), but that Sowell has a unique ability to clearly and concisely bring together an analysis. In this case, that analysis is of "why are outcomes different for different people?" Sowell writes in opposition to the current vogue for equating differential outcomes with differential justice resulting from "malign actions by others," with negative nods to Thomas Piketty, John Rawls and a wide range of similar social justice warriors. Sowell is a truth seeker. His main objection is not to those who think it's "unfair" that some people have more than others, although he thinks that's demonstrably false, and demonstrates it. His main philosophical objection is to people who won't think, because they're afraid of the truth. And his main accomplishment in the book is ruthlessly reasoning to a conclusion, peeling back extraneous layers and illogical reasoning to bring out a clear, defensible, and essentially irrefutable conclusion. This is a skill all but lost in these days of third-rate arguments, especially on platforms like Facebook, where most people have no idea what a syllogism is, and believe that depth of feeling has any relevance to reasoning. Sowell's book works on two levels. His basic arguments are fairly well-trodden ground (including being trodden by him), but pithy and exquisitely expressed, and therefore ideal for "beginners." At the same time, he expands those arguments in ways that aren't always obvious, and the clarity of his language and thought makes his arguments seem simple and inevitable.

Thomas Sowell's most important work since *Knowledge and Decisions* (1980). *Wealth, Poverty and Politics: An International Perspective* consolidates themes of earlier works by Doctor Sowell and presents them in an easy to read, well documented and updated form. I believe that Thomas Sowell intended *Preferential Policies: An International Perspective* (1990), *Race and Cultures: A World View* (1994), *Migrations and Cultures: A World View* (1996), and *Conquests and Cultures: An International History* (1998) to be parts of a comprehensive study of cultures. However he decided that the scope of that project was too large to complete within the time available. I do not know if *Wealth, Poverty and Politics: An International Perspective* was intended as a consolidation of those works. However, for me, it is the realization of that goal. Themes from *Economic Facts and Fallacies* (2008) are also presented in this work. The book is a concise 328 pages in the hardcover edition. I read the Kindle edition and I do not know how to express correlations between Kindle locations and hardcover page numbers. The 703 end notes make up almost 25% of the book and the index occupies nearly 25%. As with all of Doctor Sowell's work, the ideas are expressed in a simple, easy to read format. I do not think that I ever had to use the *New Oxford American Dictionary* that thoughtfully included with my Kindle DX. It is fortunate that Doctor Sowell simplifies the mechanics of reading his books because the ideas presented and the empirical data supporting his assertions sometimes seem overwhelming. It is well worth the time to read it once to get a feel for the subject and then read it again, including all of the notes, to absorb all of the ideas.

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